

Editor's Word

Five hundred years ago, on May 20, 1521 a cannonball upended the life of a young man with courtly dreams of military success. Thus began the conversion of Saint Ignatius of Loyola who eventually founded the Society of Jesus. On March 12, 1622, he and one of his close companions, Francis Xavier, known as the Apostle of the East, were canonized. To mark these milestones of grace, from May 2021 through July 2022, the Society of Jesus and their mission partners, including the Centre for Catholic Studies, CUHK, celebrate the Ignatian Year. As Fr. Arturo Sosa, superior general of the Society reminded us, we observe the year not simply with ceremonies or academic output. Rather it is an opportunity for our ongoing conversion. The Jesuit community and the larger Ignatian family are called “to see all things new in Christ”—to ask for the grace of a real change in our day to day life-mission.

In fact just months after the promulgation of the Universal Apostolic Preferences (UAP's) of the Society of Jesus in June 2019, a cannonball of an infectious kind shot through the world. The COVID-19 pandemic altered many lives and cut short too many; among the mishaps, plans by Jesuits and their collaborators worldwide to discern the implementation of the Universal Apostolic Preferences 2019-2029 also turned awry.

The disruption of dreams and itineraries need not be the end. Like Ignatius, we can embark on a pilgrimage, a chance to discover what we truly desire; the gifts we have been given; and the mission each of us embodies.

Drawing on his own spiritual pilgrimage, Ignatius compiled the *Spiritual Exercises* as a tool to guide such movements of discernment and of drawing closer to God. Another founding document, the *Formula of the Institute* (1540), made clear the mission of the Society of Jesus: “to strive especially for the progress of souls in Christian life and doctrine and for the propagation of the faith by the ministry of the word, by spiritual exercises and works of charity, and specifically by the education of children and unlettered persons in Christianity.”

From the beginning, the Exercises have been adapted according to the person and circumstances of the one making the Exercises. This pastoral adaptation recognizes “the rich set of realities that constitute the relationship of the one making the Exercises, the one who gives them and the Triune God (i.e., Father, Son, and Spirit) who is the ultimate Overseer of the entire enterprise.” (Howard Gray, *The Dynamics of the Exercises*, lecture one). In contemporary times, Ignatian spiritual direction is given increasingly by trained lay collaborators. This is welcome development, as the collaborators further diversify the talents and applications by which the Society of Jesus offers Spiritual Exercises as a gift.

The pandemic is said to have awakened the spiritual longing of peoples of different faiths or no faith. Perhaps. Other stressors too, such as conflicts, climate disasters, migration, social fractures and economic hardships, cry out for our discernment and conversion.

In the previous issue of this Journal, the theme was “Ignatian Spirituality and the Contemporary World” (echoing the first of the UAP’s 2019-2029). As Pope Francis affirmed, “without this prayerful attitude, the other preferences will not bear fruit.” In the current issue (#12) we delve deeper into the text of the *Spiritual Exercises*, their adaptations and encounters with other cultures, including the cultures

of feminism, somatic psychotherapy, as well as Lonergan's cross-disciplinary integration of cognitional theory with religious, moral and metaphysical developments.

Companionship and conversation have played an important role in Jesuit spirituality and ministries. What does it mean to accompany another on an Ignatian spiritual journey? What is at stake? We invited several spiritual directors to reflect on their practice. The articles in this issue are grouped into two clusters: the first five on Spiritual Exercises, and the latter three on Ignatian Spiritual Direction. The Centre for Catholic Studies and I are grateful to the eight invited contributors who share generously the fruits of their own journeys in the articles below.

There is more to the Exercises than the promotion of personal spiritual growth. Fr. James Hanvey, who supports Jesuit Pastoral Ministry and Spirituality worldwide, with particular attention to the ministry of the Spiritual Exercises, draws out for us some political and cultural implications of the Exercises. Through examining the *Principle and Foundation* and the *Two Standards*, Fr. Hanvey presents to us the answer, or rather, the challenge: Why make the Spiritual Exercises? And what is at stake?

The *Principle and Foundation* reminds us that we belong to God. In this lies our transcendent purpose and value, thus making all other claims relative. Freed from the false idols that promise absolute freedom, we come to recognize our freedom as finite but also “graced.” We are dependent: “first upon God and then upon the community and the whole of creation.” This relational inter-dependency means “we are responsible for the good of the other and assisting their movement towards God.” According to Fr. Hanvey, our “graced freedom,” though located in “the pressing realities of human finitude,” is transfigured by

Christ's resurrection. It is what gives us the opportunity to take part in God's salvific plan.

Discernment is about choice. In Fr. Hanvey's words, "Christ is the unavoidable moment of decision, the moment of 'crisis' which always has a historical and existential reality." In the second part of his paper, he reads the *Two Standards* as an interpretive key to unmask the strategies of evil particularly in contemporary times. More than a "tool," discernment becomes an "apostolic moment." Discernment is radical practice when we allow ourselves to be poor, despised and humble with Christ. What choices do we make if we live the life of Jesus as incarnate in our everyday realities? Do we follow Jesus' *praxis of reconciliation* which refuses violence and the sacrifice of victims, and so join in the redemptive work of the Cross? What would it mean, Fr. Hanvey asks, if we could develop our social, economic and educational policies guided by the values that would prioritize the well-being of the contemporary *anawim*, the powerless and marginalized, the economically and culturally deprived? The whole dynamic of the Exercises is a profound, transformational journey "in" history, Fr. Hanvey reminds us. To be transformed is to be sent into the world again as a companion of Christ to create a new space, a new possibility within history.

"One of the most unique features of Ignatian spirituality is the development of a loving gaze on all things, on all Creation, starting with a merciful and unconditional acceptance of the person who prays." To understand the origins and development of this spirituality, Fr. José García De Castro Valdés takes us through the history of the Society of Jesus. Inspired by the *Spiritual Exercises* (chiefly "Contemplation to attain love," 230-237), the Jesuits believe that it is possible to seek and find God in everything. For this reason "the Society of Jesus has been

present in very different places and very diverse circumstances, a kind of presence that employs action as a principal means to explain her religious experience, her particular way of loving God and loving the neighbor.”

While the experience of Ignatius of Loyola, and his new method to search for God were foundational, the First companions decided to form a *Societas* (“companionship”). Together they confirmed the Society’s apostolic identity, adapted creatively a variety of ministries, went on mission to distant lands where many gave generous witness with their lives; they survived political suppression, and thrived through collaboration with others. For over 480 years, through community discernment, and by attending to the movement of the Holy Spirit, the Society has maintained a suppleness that continues to open new dimensions for Ignatian Spirituality. Fr. García De Castro Valdés notes that recently, drawing upon the Society’s rich missionary tradition, “Ignatian Spirituality returns to *culture* as one of the main factors for a fruitful mission. Once Spirituality is inside a culture, a process of dialogue begins.” This Spirituality is key to developing a “culture of dialogue”; it is a Spirituality of “listening, opening to others, and being ready to start a conversation for a better world.”

Fr. Monty Williams began his article with a confession or profession of love. An experienced giver of the Spiritual Exercises, he offers this insight: not that we have a desire for God, but more radically that we are created as the desire for God. Yet our discernments are also complicated by our “ambivalence to our primary relationship with God—we are both attracted to and hesitant towards such an intimacy.”

Tracing the dynamics of desire which underpin the Four Weeks (Stages) of the Spiritual Exercises, Fr. Monty uses a spatial

metaphor—that of everyday walking, rather than a city mapped by dogma. The journey in love does not follow a linear progression. Indeed, the consolations of each stage lead us into the disorders of the subsequent level of discernment. From the first stage of a self-enclosed security, the discovery of being loved reveals the illusions that have bound us in fear. “We let the living relationship with Jesus rather than a previously imprinted cultural and intellectual understanding of truth, our own biases, be the basis of our discernments” (Stage 2). As Christ has been for us in that first stage of spiritual intimacy, we are asked to recognize the world in ways that it does not recognize itself (Stage 3). Finally we arrive at a passivity which is content to contemplate God, but at the same time is a call to “creativity which builds community across the divisions of otherness and alienation.” This, Fr. Monty describes, is contemplation in action.

In the last section of the article, Fr. Monty contrasts the dynamics of narcissism (fear) and the dynamics of self-transcendence (love). The power of fear is acute in many places today. Fr. Monty’s caution is worth noting: “Before we discern, both in the sense of what we should do, but also in how we should read the contexts in which we live, there is the need to develop that intimacy with God which is our primary relationship. If that does not happen, we misread all of our contexts, both sacred and secular.”

Using discernment as a key, Fr. Thomas P. Sherman offers a close study of two classical texts, St. Ignatius of Loyola’s *Spiritual Exercises* and Laozi’s *Dao De Jing* as practical guides to a happy life in the Aristotelian sense. Fr. Sherman reviews Ignatius’ rules for the discernment of spirits of weeks one and two to show “if a discernment of spirits is indeed a way of determining a choice of a way of life (or of any important action in the retreatant’s life) as being consonant with

God's will, the *subjective* experience of consolation ... *must* include the *objective* criterion of the faith of the Church." "The retreatant must consult not simply his or her own subjective experience of the spirit in making a choice of a way of life or action, but also and *finally* this choice must at the very least be in accord with the life of Christ as understood by the faith community." Fr. Sherman suggests that it is for this reason that Ignatius delimits choice-making as within the bounds of what is lawful within the Church (170-174, cf. 189) and concludes the *Exercises* with an appendix entitled: "Rules for Thinking with the Church (352-370)."

Though the *Dao De Jing* is not a religious text, it measures one's status in relation to the Dao or the Way: "when the best student hears about the Way he practices it assiduously, when the average student hears about the Way it seems to him one moment there and gone the next, when the worst student hears about the way he laughs out loud (41)." Fr. Sherman reads the *Dao De Jing* as a guide for discernment, for "living well and knowing one is doing so requires the sage to recognize not only his experience of inner peace and harmony as a criterion but as well the objective criterion of being in conformity with the real (vs. only apparent) harmony of nature and promoting harmony within human society." He gives the example of warfare. "Where troops have encamped, there will brambles grow" (30). Violence is contrary to the nature of the *Dao*, so the sage naturally avoids it. The text goes on to describe: "one who is good aims only at bringing a campaign to a conclusion and dares not intimidate. One brings it to a conclusion but does not boast." The verse implies that the sage recognizes that the situation compels him to fight. Such recognition presupposes an evaluation of the situation and a choice to take up arms. By what criteria could the sage choose? His experience of inner peace

and harmony would seem to offer no rationale for choosing to act, or not to act at all. But the verse implies that the sage does indeed choose to take up arms *and* that his choice is in conformity with the *Dao*. By studying similar examples in the text, Fr. Sherman concludes: “we learn from both works that if we are to live well and know that we are doing so, we need a discernment based not simply on self-justifying experience (of spiritual consolation or inner peace and harmony) but on objective, or self-transcending criterion as well.”

Dr. Margaret Chang quotes from Annotation 1 of Ignatius’ *Spiritual Exercises*: “every way of preparing and disposing the soul to rid itself of all the disordered tendencies...to seek and find the divine Will...is called a Spiritual Exercise.” She states that for women in particular, such disordered tendencies are often attributable to social structures. In a patriarchal society, people consider God as a male ruler and “sin is to be understood as rebellious behavior against divine sovereignty.” However, a woman’s sin focuses not so much on pride and self-assertion, but rather on the sin of self-doubt, timidity, powerlessness, and even of being a self-hater. Instead of exploring instances of pride, a feminist spiritual companion “might encourage a woman to take on roles of responsibility and decision-making.”

Dr. Chang quotes liberally from feminist texts and scholars. Psychologist Carol Gilligan, for instance, found that while men use abstract rules or principles to decide, women seem to view moral problems as those that arise from “conflicting responsibilities and relationships rather than from competing rights.” She argued that women consistently use relationships and personal responsibility as their primary reference points in making moral decisions. Instead of the “separation-individuation” model proposed by Erik Erikson, theorists at the Stone Center at Wellesley College assert that the

development of a woman's self is a "self-in-relation." In general, a woman does not feel threatened in connection but utilizes the opportunity to organize and develop the self in the context of an important relationship. Disposing the soul to rid itself of all the disordered tendencies thus means renewing a woman's self-in-relation with God.

Dr. Chang presents the movements in the Four Weeks of the Spiritual Exercises in terms of mutual engagement, mutual empathy, and mutual empowerment. She concludes that the feminist spiritual companion should be aware of the psychosexual development of the retreatant, and adapt the masculine language of the Exercises to facilitate growth in intersubjectivity. God's Mercy is not a restoration to divine favor, but an empathic empowerment. A quote from Maureen Aggeler sums up this journey for women: "freedom means that 'she is her own person.' The price of her freedom, solitariness, means that although she is a person in relationship, only she can/ must take responsibility for what she sees and knows."

Fr. Stephen Tong understands one of the implications of the first Principle and Foundation is to hold the tension of the opposing dynamics in one's interior and spiritual life in order to become indifferent towards all things on earth. And the major meaning and function of spiritual direction is accordingly to acknowledge and process this tension in one's experience of life and prayers through the help of the spiritual director so that interior freedom for the greater glory of God is attained.

Taking this tension as a paradigm, he sees that it commonly dwells in the process of spiritual direction and relationship between the spiritual director and directee as well. He illustrates five possible tensions, namely, silence versus conversation, affectivity versus

rationality, mundane life versus spiritual experience, total acceptance versus thinking with the Church, and human efforts versus God's graces. Heightening the consciousness of this reality, as Lonergan's transcendental method suggests, is crucial to mutual self-appropriation in the service of doing spiritual direction.

Ignatian Spirituality is a journey towards authenticity. But not all desires are authentic. In her article, Ms. Sally Law, Formation Officer of Xavier House, illustrates how Bernard Lonergan's cognitional theory can be a helpful framework to accompany the directee's journey through a series of conversions (religious, moral, intellectual and psychic) to authenticity. According to Lonergan, it is in the autonomous human subject that self-transcendental stages of experiencing, understanding, judging, and deliberating occurs. The authentic subject follows the transcendental precepts to be attentive, intelligent, reasonable, and responsible. Conversion occurs when one shifts from biases and self-absorption to becoming attentive in experience, intelligent in understanding, reasonable in judgment, and responsible in deciding.

Love motivates a person to follow the transcendental precepts in operations of consciousness while fear fuels one's biases and leads to decline. Lonergan defined flight from understanding and flight from responsibility as biases which block continuous growth in authenticity and leads to inauthenticity. The spiritual director can help the directee turn from focusing on the incidents outside to self-appropriation of one's own inner operations. While spiritual directors explore with the directees their personal experiences, the focus is not to alleviate one's problem but to unpack the human dimensions of experiences as dispositions for prayer. Ms. Law posits: "Conscious presence to oneself is a foundation for presence to the Other."

Ms. Veronica Lai takes note of contemporary advances in neurosciences and introduces Somatic Experiencing, a body-oriented trauma healing model (developed by Peter Levine in the 1970s) as an approach to the discernment of spirits in spiritual direction. She cites Paul Yakovlev, a Russian-born neuropathologist, who challenged the top-down model that it was the “higher” thinking brain that controlled the “lower” functions of the body. Yakovlev argued that the “evolutionarily most primitive brain structures in the brain stem (dubbed the “reptilian brain”) and hypothalamus (“limbic brain”) are those that form “the matrix upon which the remainder of the brain, as well as behavior is elaborated.”

Modern imaging technology allows us to see a “bodily map of emotions”—the blood flow in the viscera, how and which neurons are “fired or charged” when a thought arises, or when there is a sensation. Thoughts are “charged” with feelings. Ms. Lai quotes Ignatius on “interior knowledge—for it is not much knowledge but the inner feeling and relish of things that fills and satisfies the soul” and the Prayer of the Senses in the *Spiritual Exercises*. Here I find an article by Gemma Simmonds (“Making sense of the application of the senses”) clarifying. Simmonds remarks: “The Spanish word sentir carries the same ambiguity as ‘to sense’ in English, in that it includes mental as well as bodily processes, but it is a broader word still, including intuition and emotional feelings. In week two of the Exercises especially, the senses are seen as an instrument of prayer and discernment. Being present to Jesus as he acts through his own bodily senses we come to share more deeply in his human experience and self-understanding....Praying to share Jesus’s way of sensing and feeling is not a way to pray when our minds can take us no further...It requires praying to be transformed at what is often for us the source of

dislocation and ambiguity when our sensual and affective longings take us in different directions from our rational thought processes.” For Simmonds, it confirms as reliable “the *sensus Christi* (1 Cor 2:16), which enables us to feel with the feelings of Jesus as well as to have his mind.” Ms. Lai concludes with two case studies using SIBAM (Sensation, Image, Behavior, Affect and Meaning), a Somatic Experiencing tool, to examine the movement of the spirits and to “detect across the whole spectrum of our activity and consciousness the movements through which the Holy Spirit leads and enlightens us, and those through which other influences, if given their head, work against that guiding and light.”

The Centre for Catholic Studies is a unit of the Chinese University of Hong Kong which is a place of scholarship (from Latin *schola* meaning "intermission of work, leisure for learning; learned conversation"). When the Jesuits in Hong Kong began the sponsorship of the Centre for Catholic Studies, CUHK, in August 2019, the Centre also becomes part of a network of Jesuit intellectual apostolate, with emphasis on scholarship, practice and mission. “Intellectual” is derived from a Latin word, meaning "discernment, understanding.” The term “apostolate” means “being sent as an apostle”; and as we recall in the *Formula of the Institute*, we are a companionship dedicated to the progress of souls in the Christian life and doctrine and to the propagation of the faith.

In his first interview as superior general, Fr. Sosa highlighted intellectual depth. He ventured: “We need to understand what is happening in today’s world and in today’s church in order to understand faith.” At the beginning of this Ignatian year, he continues: “we ask for the grace of a real change in our day to day life-mission”; “to see all things new in Christ.” We hope the articles in this issue

devoted to the Spiritual Exercises and Ignatian spiritual direction would lead to conversations, even collaboration with colleagues and all people of good will that will help us discern our respective life-mission.

The knowledge and understanding that we propagate, do they reveal the beauty and truth of all that exist? Does what we learn transform relations and social structures so that those whose dignity has been violated can be free to thrive and contribute to the common good? Do we design systems of governance from the local to global levels—based on subsidiarity, transparency and conflict resolution—so that life would be sustainable, I mean, for our children’s children?

We are embarking on a pilgrimage to discern, and put in practice the four universal apostolic preferences:

- A. To show the way to God through the Spiritual Exercises and discernment;
- B. To walk with the poor, the outcasts of the world, those whose dignity has been violated, in a mission of reconciliation and justice;
- C. To accompany young people in the creation of a hope-filled future;
- D. To collaborate in the care of our Common Home.

Will you join us in this spiritual and intellectual journey?

Fr. Stephen Tong, SJ